

HartfordStreetZen.com
ISSAN-JI
Hartford Street Zen
Center

Newsletter

FALL 2002

Hartford Street Zen Center is a Buddhist temple in the Soto Zen tradition located in the heart of the Castro district.

We offer a daily schedule of Zen Buddhist meditation, weekly sitting instruction, Saturday Public Lectures, and mid-day sittings for the HIV community, caregiver and friends. HSZC was started in 1981 by a group of gay and lesbian Buddhist practitioners to serve everyone in the neighborhood. It is also called Issanji, One Mountain Temple, after our founder Issan Dorsey Roshi.

Our last newsletter was published a year ago. We apologize for not communicating sooner, but our temple has experienced many "comings and goings" this year.

The most recent was the death of our retired abbot, Zenshin Philip Whalen, on June 26th at Laguna Honda hospice after a long illness.

His life and poetic genius was celebrated at the *Philip Whalen Memorial Reading*, August 30th, at Presentation Theater. 25 poets participated, reading from Philip's work, or reading poems dedicated to Philip. Among the participant's were Jane Hirshfield, Dianne diPrima, David Meltzer, and Anne Waldman. Poet Michael McClure said, "He left and handed the

world over to us." Michael



Rothenberg said, "It's a bad idea that Philip died." Leslie Scalapino replied, "It makes me nervous." Ann Waldman shared that sentiment, "The world is a scarier place without him."

Norman Fischer said, "It's a different world without Philip in it. When he died he was surrounded by good friends all night long... Philip was a notorious and famous complainer. He held no truck with the death & dying movement. He just wanted to keep things moving. And he did until he died. He was a role model for me - a dharma practitioner, priest and poet. He was a very good poet and a genius at just being himself. Philip was the greatest writer of his generation."

New Residents:

There is a new atmosphere at Hartford Street created out of the sense of community of the new residents: Dominique Zuni, Francois Hussenet, Noah Samuels, Charlotte Richardson and Rev. Myo Lahey. Farewell and best wishes to outgoing residents, Jim Biggs and Jim Mitchell.

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Philip's Crossing Over Ceremony was held at Green Dragon Temple September 1, 2002. The ceremony was officiated by Roshi Zentatsu Richard Baker and Roshi Zoketsu Norman Fischer. Former HSZC Abbot Steve Allen carried Zenshin's ashes in the procession which included poets Gary Snyder and Michael McClure. Sozan Schellin carried Zenshin's picture. In tribute to Zenshin's great romance with food, peanut brittle and Chinese take out food was placed on altar. He loved to be taken out to lunch.

Baker-roshi said, "This (memorial) is the last poem, teaching from Philip. We are his bardo, the first step of his journey. He is in us or you would not be here. Philip died well, this is his last teaching. Zenshin Ryufu - absorbed, transformed, mind & dragon wind or breath. In his mother's lap. Accepting this moment." Baker-roshi added to Zenshin's name, "Great Samadhi Gate."

Gary Snyder said, "Critical intelligence and frailty were his teaching methods." Gary told intimate and funny stories about meeting Philip in the 50's, rooming together with him on Montgomery Street and experimenting with poetry. Allen Ginsberg arrived in town and helped catalyze the whole Beat phenomena. Gary always worried about Philip's ability to make a living. Philip went back to Oregon briefly to work as an assistant to a bailiff, then taught English when he lived in Japan. When Philip was ordained as a Buddhist priest, Gary stopped worrying.

Norman Fischer commented "This world where you lose your friends in the end. I haven't cried yet but maybe I will burst into tears when I see nasturtiums (Philip's favorite flower) ...Both of us misfits - too pious for poets and too wild for Zens. He was on his death bed a really long time...how well he handled pain and discomfort. One of the great poets of physical distress.. Most important person in my life. Foggy wind in eucalyptus trees. Cityscape leaning into ocean."

Former HSZC Abbot Steve Allen said, "Philip filled his seat a lot bigger than I did! After his poet career he morphed. His whole life became a poem. So rare and wonderful to find such a person."

Nancy Davis spoke for her son Cosmos. She asked what he thought of Philip, and Cosmos said, "Philip was a good guy. He is alive, not like all the dead people walking around."

Board President Lynne Menefee said, "Zenshin's spirit continues to infuse the wood floors (of our zendo) and blooming gardens of Hartford Street Zen Center, as well as the hearts of his students. He continues to teach through his poetry. Please give a thought and warm spiritual hug to this great teacher."





FRAGMENT OF GREAT BEAUTY & STILLNESS

I thought that if I read Homer a little
 While before going to sleep, I could lie in
 The dark hearing the sound of the waves breaking
 On the shore and the cry of seagulls and
 Feel hot sun on my back and wind blow
 In my ear. I might see my shadow flat on
 The sand beside me among the shallow
 Ripples and rills, thin smooth heavy
 Edge of the sea, light in varying densities
 Make the wrinkled waters look thick as honey.

-Philip Whalen 22:ii:65 from *ON BEAR'S HEAD*



Weight

by Rick London

When I heard around noon on Tuesday that Philip was expected to die within a matter of hours, I found myself thinking of a statement Gail Sher read at a conference on poetry and meditation maybe 15 years ago. In this statement, I don't think Gail mentioned poetry or meditation at all, except briefly at the end. Mostly, she talked about a

piano teacher she'd had who told her that striking the right keys at the right tempo was less important than applying the right amount of weight while you were playing. And it was only later that I remembered Philip was also part of the panel where Gail read her statement. (Philip, as I recall, was almost dismissive of the event. He mumbled something about seeing no particular connection between poetry and meditation - they were each their own thing and there wasn't much else he could say about it).

In life, Philip was good at applying the right amount of weight to the keys - and he had a naturally light touch. This did not seem to be something Philip had to work at. He had a deep-

running knack for being himself. He was way too savvy to screw up his enjoyment of life with too much self-evaluation, but he was always aware of himself and the situations he found himself in. And he didn't make any effort to hide himself. So when his whimsical, magical mind was at work, he could really be entertaining. A few weeks ago, we somehow got to talking about tombstones. Near the end of this rambling conversation, he remarked that, rather than the traditional R.I.P. inscription, he thought R.S.V.P. might be a good alternative - preferably rendered in tasteful neon. Although I neglected to ask him, I'm guessing he would have told me that I'll have to figure out for myself what number to use when the time comes to make the call.



APPRECIATION

to all visiting and supporting teachers and priests who support our practice. Dave Haselwood, Mark Lancaster's, Paul Rosenblum, Jana Drakka, John King, Michael Wenger, and all others.

Our Condolences:

Dave Haselwood's wife Hilda died on July 6, 2002 at home in Cotati after a long bout with cancer. Hilda grew up in New York City. She was a child prodigy who graduated from college as a teenager and became an attorney who served only those whose cases she believed in, regardless of their ability to pay. Hilda was known for her big heart and her prodigious and acerbic sense of humor. When Dave and Hilda met, they recognized that as

two unusual people they belonged together. Hilda never became a Buddhist, but she was always totally supportive of Dave's practice and referred to herself as Mrs. Buddhist. We convey our deepest condolences to Dave and their three children for their loss.

Groups Meeting at HSZC

HIV Sitting Group:

For those with HIV, caregivers, lovers, friends and anyone from the community who wants to sit with us. Thursday and Friday mornings at 10:30am. Sitting until 11am. Brief meditation instruction offered.

GMBS Book Study Group:

Thursday evenings 7:15 pm to 8:30 pm. Group meets weekly to discuss books with Buddhist content of interest to the group. Contact: Steve Kline (415) 824- 2671, stevekline@ix.netcom.com

Inner Journey Group:

Tuesday Evenings: 7:30pm -9:30. Inner Journey holds meditations open to all gay men. These meditations have formats designed to cause self inquiry, energy movement, relaxation and reflection. There is also a simple sharing of thoughts. An opportunity to meet other gay men in a safe and loving environment.

BUDDHIST FILM FESTIVAL.

HSZC hosted a reception for the Buddhist Film Festival on Friday, Sept. 20th. Because we are so close to the Castro Theater, it seemed natural to offer our temple as a meeting place.

Michael Wenger, organizer of the festival, was delighted and said that he'd like to have a reception for the festival's sponsors, full subscribers, and VIPs.

Film director and writer Doris Dorre dropped in for a visit as



did actor and Zen Priest Michael O'Keefe, and writer Gretel Ehrlich.

This proved to be a good op-

portunity for us to continue our visibility in the Buddhist community at large. Diamond, a monk from City Center, recently back in town after being at Tassajara, prepared some delicious hors-d'oeuvres.

Hartford Street Board Members and residents spent hours washing windows, scrubbing floors, dusting, and making flower arrangements.

New sofas were donated by Jim Biggs and installed in the living room just in time for this special occasion.



Continuing The Search...

Another loss was our practice leader and resident monk, Ottmar Engel, who returned to Germany last December after practicing with us for one year. He is currently receiving transmission with his teacher Baker-roshi, living in Berlin with his partner Peter, and helping out on his parent's dairy farm. We celebrate and are grateful for the year we had with Ottmar. Sozan Schellin took over the position of "resident monk" for the month of January, and is now in Texas and is in transmission process with his teacher Barbara Kohn.

From February through spring, the temple was "sangha led." One of our visiting teachers, Paul Rosenblum, described it as "the

sangha is leading the sangha," as we continued the process of finding a new practice leader.

John King graciously accepted the position of "interim practice leader" until he left for Tassajara the end of September. John King is a long time friend of HSZC and a former resident. The temple continued to evolve under his light and loving hand. John has a unique gift for making people feel welcome and appreciated, and Hartford Street grew more open hearted while he was practice leader. We will continue to integrate the generosity of his spirit into our practice.

Beginning the end of September, Myo Denis Lahey took over the position of

HSZC Practice Leader for three months. Myo is a longtime Zen Center priest, and received Dharma trans-



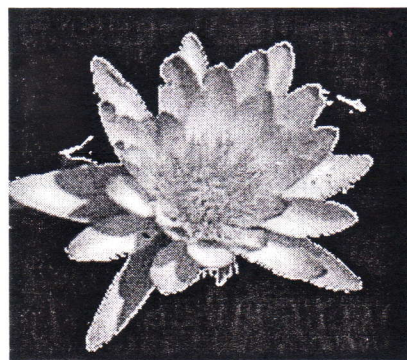
mission from Tenshin Reb Anderson several years ago.

Myo brings the special gift of a refined receptivity to the community. We look forward to exploring with him his continuing with us, and Hartford Street's evolution under his leadership.

Please Remember

Ron Wickliffe, who died September 28th, 2001. His practice presence and loving friendship at the HIV sitting group is deeply missed. Ron was responsible for maintaining the mailing list and formatting the newsletter, which he performed with great dedication. Ron's memorial was held at HSZC in the fall of 2001, attended by family and many friends.

Allen Balderson donated a teak bench with a plaque to Ron's memory, located in the back garden by the bamboo grove.



Ron Wickliffe

by Michael Palumbo

I met Ron Wickliffe at the HIV sitting group when visiting from Philadelphia. He became a strong support for me, my continued good health, and fledgling prac-

tice. Whenever I called Ron to see how he was doing, he would always say matter of fact what was going on, then immediately switch to, "How are you doing? How's the neuropathy? What's your energy level like? And always, How's your practice?" I am so very pleased to have met such a man, and I will miss him. Thank you for coming into my life, Ron. I'm saddened that you are gone, but know that you live in my heart, where you've always been. You are the source of much strength and courage for me.



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625 Valencia St. at 17th.
415-861-4910. Please keep
your donations of old clothes,
furniture, and books coming.
Drop off donations at the side
door on Sycamore Alley, and
register them to HSZC, ac-
count #155.

NEWSLETTER PRODUC- TION:

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JIZO STATUE DONATED:

An extraor-
dinary gift
came from
s a n g h a
m e m b e r
Brian Brun-
ning. Brian
happened
across a
J a p a n e s e
stone Jizo
statue that
called out to

him for a home at Hartford
Street Zen Center. He do-
nated the statue, which
was placed in the back gar-
den. Brian also provided
nearby landscaping. Ab-
bess Blanche Hartman of
San Francisco Zen Center,
in a moving ceremony,
dedicated the Jizo and
"opened its eyes" by paint-
ing a black dot at the cen-
ter of each eye. Hartford
Street is deeply grateful to
Brian and Blanche for
bringing the Jizo to live
here.

E-mail us at:
zen@hartfordstreetzen.
com

SIX BLACK BOWLS

FOR ZENSHIN PHILIP WHALEN, TEACHER
[OCTOBER 20, 1923-JUNE 26, 2002]

six black bowls came down to me
through Baker, Issan and you
from Suzuki-roshi to my tan in the zendo;
today, it was orange juice in the bowl
from which your tomato juice flooded Tassa-
jara;
you warned us, Dharma is like chewing on a
tar baby;
you can't get rid of it;
and so with you;
the "old man licorice;
"atennyrate," in one swell foop
the koromo empties itself;
smoke wafts in the zendo;
we kinhin around seeking your poems;
"college cheese," "kow," now put away;
calligraphy from Hui-Neng lining the drawer;
no dust under your bed; no mirror;
Kannon embracing all from the dresser top;

Lou ready to read again;
Ginsberg gone ahead, "irregardless," poems
and sushi waiting
in your room;
silent sesshin, except for thunder, here in
Texas
where you only came to be with me

MEMBERSHIP AT HSZC

HSZC survives and flourishes only through the
generosity and involvement of our members and
donors. We encourage you to become involved
either as a practicing member or financial or
service contributor or all of the above. Practicing
members sit regularly and contribute a
suggested \$40 monthly. Contributing members
include Friends of HSZC who contribute \$60 or
more a year, Supporting Members, (\$500 or
more), and Patrons (\$1000 or more). All
members receive newsletters by mail and
announcements by e-mail. Others may receive
the newsletter on request. Anyone, member or
not, may join us for zazen at any time. We
welcome you to our sangha and offer whatever
support you may need in your practice.



TEMPLE ACTIVITIES

Public Lecture every Saturday at 10:00am, followed by tea and discussion.

Monthly One-Day Sit-tings: On the first Saturday of each month, Hartford Street Zen Center holds a day of silence. From 5 am until 6 pm, participants follow a simple schedule of zazen, kinhin, brief chanting, and work practice. Two vegetarian meals are served, with tea and snacks in the afternoon. Please email Baizan@Yahoo.com to reserve a place. Suggested donation is \$40 for the full day or \$20 for half the day. The Saturday sit and dharma talk are

worked into the schedule, and are open free to the public as usual.

Beginner's Instruction:

Third Saturday each month, from 1:00PM to 4:00PM we have instruction for beginners and those new to zazen practice. Learn about Zendo forms, meditation posture on a cushion or bench and walking meditation (Kinhin). We sit twice in silence for 30 minutes, followed by tea and opportunities to ask questions and share our experience. Please call HSZC for registration. Suggested donation: \$10.

Open Dinner Fourth Friday Each

Month: Hartford Street Zen Center has resumed an old tradition of open dinners, on the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m.. Mark your calendar! We offer a delicious home-cooked meal and a chance to meet & mingle with Hartford Street sangha members. Come early and sit zazen with us at 6:00 if you can. The cost of the dinner is \$8. Everyone is welcome. Please reserve a space by Wednesday evening of the fourth week with hostess Mimi: at Mimimanning@earthlink.net or call 415.431.2665.

ANNUAL MEMBER'S MEETING

was held last January. The primary focus was on finding leadership and discussing HSZC's role in the community. Long time supporters of HSZC and new friends turned out to give their support for the temple's direction. Vicki Austin, SFZC president was ordained with Issan. She reminded us how passionate he was about having a secure place in the Castro for people to practice that was not San Francisco Zen Center. He had a favorite koan, "willing to live and die together." She said, "How can I support what Issan wanted?" She remembered him at the Mountain Seat Ceremony in 1990 when he was dying. "As long as I am alive, this door will always be open." He went to the door of the zendo and

opened it. Everybody wept." She said his practice was about "face to face, body to body teaching."

Rick London remembered Issan, how he vowed to settle into fundamental intimacy with anyone who happened to come in the door, and then work it out from there. We took this as our point of departure, to reflect on Issan's time for guidance. Bruce Boone remembered Issan's Royal road, heart path, rare in Zen world. "Issan said that AIDS is the teacher during 80's. He was addressing suffering in the neighborhood. He tied our practice place into a social focus." Others said that although they didn't know Issan personally they know the legacy of his practice and are committed to keeping it alive.

What is the focal point

of community right now? How can we serve this? How can we serve the community and the practice?

Lynne Menefee, "The main thing about people at HSZC is that they're usually newer to the practice, and often rather unusual personalities. So we must stay far more flexible than SFZC's temples in our response to such irritations as people bowing in the wrong direction and visiting priests stepping through the invisible wall beside Issan's altar. The tension between establishmentarian Zen, and disestablishmentarian Castroites, is at once the koan and backbone of HSZC. To me, it's invigorating. I hope it will be to you, too!



HSZC Temple Schedule

HSZC offers a traditional schedule of Zen meditation. For those new to zazen, a brief beginner's instruction is held Saturday mornings in the zendo from 8:30-9am. There is a public lecture Saturday's at 10am, followed by discussion and tea. All are welcome. Please arrive 10 minutes prior to scheduled times.

There is a One-Day Sitting, 5am to 6pm the first Saturday of each month.

On the third Saturday of each month, from 1pm-4pm, there is a Beginner's instruction session.

MORNING: Monday through Friday

6:00am Zazen
6:40am Service

EVENING: Monday through Friday

6:00pm Zazen
6:40pm Service

SATURDAY:

A brief beginning Zazen instruction from 8:30am until 9am
9:10am: Zazen
10:00am: Public Lecture, followed by tea and discussion.

Donations to support the temple are appreciated.

Board members:

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Don Herald
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Rick London
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